

Patriarchal Values

Girls are More Apt to Change

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How has the family value system changed between generations, especially when taking into account the gender dimension? This article presents some results from a study carried out in 2007 in one village of the Gourani tribe where the people are followers of *Ahle Hagh* in *Islamabad Gharb* (west of Iran).

The differences between generations (those born and raised before and after the Islamic Revolution) in patriarchal values in the family are statistically significant. The older generation opts for the man of the family to make most of the decisions; on children's education, marriage, naming, the families expenditure, the place for residence, the social network of the family and even the number of children. The younger generation has a different value system and it has moved towards a more egalitarian type of family.

With the gender variable included in the findings we see that although the values of the younger male population have evolved toward a less patriarchal decision making structure in the family, the degree of changes among the young women is much higher.

Looking into the preferences for male sex for the first child as well as a larger number of boys in the family, the difference between generations is significant. However data on the differences analyzed with the gender variable proves that the changes concerning the equality of sexes are mainly due to drastic changes in the young women's value system. That is, the male population, young or old, still prefer to have a boy as their first born and to have more sons in the family. But the young female generation in the rural area sees less difference in having boys or girls in the family.

It is concluded that reforms in the old value system is an evolving process of everyday life and that the girls are the main social force for change.

Key words: generation, girls, patriarchal values, Iran

We are living in the era of communication and globalization, in which cultural boundaries between nations are disappearing and life is continuously in the process of transition and reform; changes in roles defined by gender, socio-economic class, or ethnicity are the facts of our everyday life. Such circumstances imply different experiences in the life courses of different generations. Generations gain different perspec-

tives and learn different norms and values. Since they have not experienced similar socialization processes, they do not hold the same attitudes and beliefs. The younger generation has access to a much expanded cultural network and develops a value system which is very different from and sometimes in conflict with those of the older generation. Changes in family values regarding spouse selection, preferences of boys over girls and authoritative power structure are just examples of the cultural differences among generations.

If we define culture as evolving patterns of learned behavior, formed during the socialization process, and attitudes, values and material goods as cultural products (Cuber 1968:80 in Chitamar 1378: 81), then in transitional societies changes in values are inevitable. The young generation strives to relieve itself from the traditions which have persistently governed their life. There is a cultural evolution process.

In transitional societies due to the provision of educational opportunities in combating the high rate of illiteracy, progress of science and technology and adoption and diffusion of new ideas through accessibility of mass media, we find that the practice of old customs and traditions is impossible and that it even seems unnecessary. Such perception and understanding of the older generations' value system results in generational differences. A generational gap is not a new phenomenon but in Iran, as a transitional society, it has gained momentum. Two main factors have been recognized by socio-political analysts: the modernization process and the Islamic Revolution. The Islamic Revolution succeeded by participation of all, women and men, especially youth. The Revolution resulted in drastic changes in the political structure of the country like any other revolution and it has been one of the main factors in cultural change and value changes in recent decades.

Abrahamian writes that the Revolution in Iran had social, political and economic dimensions and that it was governed by a completely religious ideology. It occurred in the 1970's in the era of revolution in communication technology. He believes that there is no doubt that the then young generation, urban dwellers with higher education and critical intellectuals, were the major social forces behind it and that they had the main role in Revolution's victory (Abrahamian 1377: 489-497).

Thirty years after the Islamic Revolution we are witnessing the formation of differences in cultural patterns between generations. The generations possess different value systems due to the circumstances and the socialization processes of their life course. (Ghazinejad 1383, Azadarmaki and Ghiasvand 1383, Abdollahyan 1383, Mohseni 1379, Abdi and Goudarzi 1378, Taimouri 1377) The latest generation (the third one) lacks the experience of hardships in transition of one political system to another and it is also without participation in the eight years of war and its trauma. This generation is demanding new experiences. They want to escape from the imposed values of past generations and with access to modern mass media, they have created new values. Their perspective towards the world, the society, the people and everything else has changed (Bashirieh 1378:86-88).

Although rural areas of Iran have not been quoted as very involved in Revolution (Abrahamian 1377:495), probably caught in their meager living conditions, they have

enjoyed the benefits of development and experienced changes in their life. Based on social indicators we see that they are more educated, have more clean water and electricity and that they have access to mass media. Transportation facilities have facilitated their access to the cities (Statistical Center of Iran 1365 & 1385, Habibi & Beladi 1377:140–150) and their life style including cultural traditions has been exposed to changes by the younger generations.

Islamic state should be credited for its achievement in delivering educational services and accessibility of mass media, even in the remotest villages. This has provided the context for the socio-cultural changes in the entire society, including the family.

This article aims at exploring how changes in the last three decades after the Islamic Revolution have influenced generations of the rural areas of Iran. Has it resulted in generational differences? Does the gender factor enhance generational gaps?

Part of the findings of a research on the changes of the family value system will be presented. This study was conducted in 2007 in one of the villages of the *Gourani* tribe in the province of *Kermanshah* in west of Iran, who are followers of *Al Hagh* in *Islamabad Gharb*.

More specifically the questions are:

- Do the generations of young age (15–25) and of older age (45–55) differ on gender related family values, i.e. gender roles, decision making and sex preferences?
- If so, are the generational differences the same for two sexes?

Approaches to generational gaps

Like most of the concepts in social science, there is no full consensus on what is a “generation”. Are “age”, date of birth and death, the most important factor in recognizing a generation or should social and/or political upheavals be applied to distinguish one generation from the other? Is it shared destiny or socio-economic class or is it the location and geography of where individuals live which constitute a generation?

Basically, there are two approaches to historical generations, the mechanical approach and the entelechy approach (Yousefi 1383, Azadarmaki & Ghafari 1383, Ghazinejad 1383, Chitsaz & Ghanbari 1385, Ingelhart 1373).

In the mechanical approach of historical generations (the positivist approach) biologic generations are the sources of social change and the mechanism for transferring cultural values to the next generation. The young generation acquires the values and attitudes of the older one; therefore there will be continuity in culture. At the same time, the younger generation reforms and adjusts the values and social changes will be the outcome. Thus the main presumption of the mechanical approach is that social change follows a biological pace between generations. This perspective of historical generation has been criticized for not looking at the generational consciousness and for bypassing the importance of social events in the formation of consciousness (Schuman & Scott 1989:359).

The Entelechy approach which is formulated by Mannheim (in 1936 and 1952)

includes age cohorts as well as crystallization of generational entelechy. According to Mannheim, important historical events can disrupt the linkages between the young and the older generation, and they can even influence the consensus and disparities within the youth of the same age groups. Mannheim emphasizes that generation is not of a biological nature but it is rooted and raised in socio-historical context. Therefore generation is socially constructed and it is influenced by the most important historical-social events (Rempel 1965:55–56). To Mannheim a generation consists of individuals who have lived a common socio-historical life and who share experiences and consciousness (Azadarmaki and Ghafari 1383:29, Yousefi 1383: 20–25).

The historical generation's approach of Mannheim with entelechy has a combination of three characteristics:

- Life course/Age
- Location/Geography
- Time/History

In Mannheim's view cultural and social changes are microscopic rather than cultural ruptures (Rempel 1965). Those with shared experiences in the socio-historical processes gain a different perspective from their counterparts in previous generations and these unique experiences and this consciousness pave the road for social change.

In this perspective, development of a new generation is related to social change and the speed of socio-historical events. Mannheim believed that where the new events are scarce and changes are residual and very slow such as in the traditional peasant societies, a new generation is not created. Only when and where events are prominent we can see an actual generation (Ghazinejad 1383:35–47).

The present paper takes Mannheim's approach to generation. Generation is defined as those who are living in a common geographical location within a certain age category, having almost similar socio-economic status, holding shared cultural identity and experiencing the most important historical events of Iran, that is the Islamic Revolution.

The study is carried out in a society which used to be a traditional peasant society with very few disruptions. Probably, prior to Revolution, there was only one generation according to Mannheim. However, with a socio-historical event such as the Revolution, should we expect the creation of a new generation? How do generations differ on values and more specifically on more tangible values such as family? Does the generational gap appear as a conflict between generations? Are the gaps cultural ruptures or are they the result of more gradual changes?

Development programs of Iran delivering different types of services by formal and informal institutions, have affected some of the family's functions such as educating its members and transferring the customs. However, ideologically family is still the most important social unit of our society and it has been a stable institution in comparison to all other social units.

Researchers on family values in the urban areas show that there are some changes

in the process and that generations differ on some values (Mohseni 1379, Azadarmaki 2004, Azadarmaki & Ghafari 1383) but is this also the case in rural areas? The general perception is that Iran's rural area is still the old traditional peasant society where no important social events happen. Is this perception based on facts?

Shared location and life course

Ali Barani is a village in *Islamabad Gharb* (the second largest city) in the province of Kermanshah. In this village there are 76 families with around 500 inhabitants. The female population constitutes 50.4 per cent. The village is 28 kilometers from the nearest town. Agricultural activities are the main sources of income to the families and handicrafts which used to be a second source is not viable. The houses are buildings by mud brick and in two floors. The first floor (basement) is for keeping sheep and the family lives on the second floor. Very recently rich families in the village have built four new houses with new materials of bricks and cement where the place for keeping animals is at the other side of the house.

Most of the village's infrastructure is developed after the Islamic Revolution. The villagers have access to clean water, electricity, telephone, gas, paved roads, elementary and guidance schools and national and provincial television broadcasts. There is no secondary school in the village. Boys go to a larger village 10 kilometers away and girls have to go to the nearby city or the center of province.

Based on the latest data (2006/1385) 77 per cent of women and 85 per cent of men are literate which compared to the rural literacy rate of the province (68 per cent and 79 per cent respectively) is much higher.

Villagers are from the *Gourani* tribe and believers of *Ahle Hagh*. The followers of *Ahle Hagh*, who are mostly in the Kermanshah Province, see themselves as Moslems interested in saving the old customs and traditions of their ancestors and Iranian culture. The principles of *Ahle Hagh* are good thought, good talk and good conduct. These are the same principles as those of the Zoroastrians (Tabibi 1371:287).

In the *Barani* village and in the *Gourani* tribe marriages are decided by parents and most families marry within the group (endogamy). Divorce and polygamy is not accepted by the society. Families with more children, especially male children, have a higher social prestige. According to their customs only the boys of the family receive land from the father and land claims from girls are not respected by the families. It seems that the family system and the society at large is male dominated.

Out of 543 inhabitants, 140 took part of the study. Two samples, one with 83 people from the age group 15–25 and one with 57 people from the age group 45–55 were randomly selected. The young group was born and raised after the Islamic Revolution and the older group belonged to the generation born and socialized before Revolution. We tried to have the same distribution of male and female in our samples as in the population of the village.

Generational gap in family values

The common denominator of most of the definitions of value is desirability of a conduct (Yousefi 1383:143). Family values are defined as those behaviors and attitudes which are perceived as desirable/undesirable by the family members.

Among a range of specific family values in our study such as spouse selection, marriage customs and ceremonies, ownership of land or other assets of the family, division of labor and tasks within the family, decision making on economic issues, decision on the number of children, the importance of male sex for the first born and preferences of boys over girls, here findings on three values of great importance to socio-cultural change will be discussed. The field work (participant observations, informal discussions and filling in questionnaires) aims at responding the questions of the enquiry; are there generational differences and how do the results differ when data are analyzed by the sex variable. Is the generational gap engendered?

1. Decision making

In traditional societies families are mostly male dominated and decision making is men's rights. The man's authority to practice this right over all family members is legitimized by law and custom.

Making decisions means the right to choose between different alternatives for doing the same things. To measure the concept of decision making in the family, data on two main categories of items were collected: (1) Decisions related to the children (including their marriages, jobs and education), (2) Decisions relevant to the relation of spouses (such as number of children, selection of names for the children and grandchildren, purchasing household appliances, family income, expenditures and relation with friends and families).

The main assumption of the study is that if changes on family values between generations have been actualized (generations born and socialized before and after the Revolution), then research findings should present statistically significant differences on the items of the decision making structure in the family.

Based on the field work and data analysis¹, we find that the rate of agreement with men's absolute decision making authority in the family has declined. Comparison of mean differences of the two generations on this specific family value (t test for equality of mean is -5.09 at 0.01 significant levels) proves that the transition from the old to the young generation has created a generational gap. The younger generation has adjusted their values, and their opposition to men as sole decision makers of the family has increased.

1 To show differences between generations with/without sex variable the rate of change on each item is calculated by adding up the share of those in favor of keeping male domination in the younger generation divided to the same share in the older generation. Therefore the rate could range from 0 to 1. If it equals to one it means there are no changes between two generations. If it is close to zero it means that the generational gap is large.

While the older generation is polarized regarding the changes in the decision making structure at home, the younger generation has moved towards more moderate views and is less prejudiced. We find more neutral reactions (over 20 per cent) to the items especially on the number of children, selection of names for children and grand children, decision on purchasing home appliances and social network of the family.

Have gender differences in the old and the young generation had any effect on the generational gap? How different are women of the older generation from girls of the younger one? Is it possible that the gender generational gap is the main source of generational differences?

The findings show that generational differences of both sexes are statistically significant. However, the changes among young women are more distinguished. The younger female generation demands more rights for decision making within the family on almost all decisions and expects their voice be heard by their counterpart. In some of the decisions such as the number and name of the children the majority disagreed that this decision should be made by men.

On two items, "men should have the right to make decisions on household's expenditure and income" and "residence's location", we see actually very little changes in the male population (0.91 and 0.87) between the two generations and some changes in women (0.75 and 0.62 respectively). Although there are significant generational differences among women, male respondents of both generations do agree that women cannot be responsible to make decisions on these items (table 1). The theme of these items is embedded in our laws. Men are responsible to support their family financially (article 1106 of Civil Law) and a woman has the right to file a complaint in court if a man does not do his duty properly (article 1111). Also women should submit to men's decision on the location of their residence (article 1114). Whether resistance to change of this type of values among men is the result of our laws or our customs is not an issue of this article but the important finding is that young women have changed more than young men. We witness gaps in values between generations as well as the existence of gendered generations.

Table 1. Changes in decision making

The values of the generational gap vary between 0 and 1. If a value equals to 1 it means that there are no changes between the two generations. If it comes closer to zero it means that the generational gap is large.

Item	Generational* gap	Gender generational gap	
		male	female*
Women should decide on children's marriages	0.6	0.7*	0.4*
Men should decide on children's education	0.5	0.6*	0.5*
Men should decide on purchasing household appliances	0.3	0.6*	0.1*
Women should decide on family income and expenditure	0.8	0.9	0.7*
Men should decide on the location of residence	0.8	0.9	0.6*
Women should decide on the relations with friends/ families	0.6	0.7*	0.5*
Men should decide on names for children and grandchildren	0.5	0.7*	0.4*
Men should decide on the number of children	0.6	0.8*	0.4*

2. Gender division of labor

In almost every culture, patterns of role division at home are socially constructed. What a woman or man can do, although perceived as biological in nature is more defined by culture and society (Shaditalab 1379:23).

Rural households in Iran are a production unit. Like in any other country, women have reproductive role as well as productive and social roles. They are expected to do much more than just household chores. They perform many tasks on the family farm and with the husbandry which are defined as economic activity by outsiders. However, rural men and also women themselves perceive this work as part of their duties as housewife (Shaditalab 1375, Shaditalab 1376, Shaditalab 1381).

Based on previous research, items for gender division of labor within rural families building on the categories of public and private domains were developed: (1) Those activities related to the household as a production unit such as driving the tractor and operating agricultural machinery, going to the bank and credit centers, providing inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides,) and marketing of the agricultural products. (2) Those activities related to the family such as taking care of children and elders, taking care of husbandry and processing of milk products. Usually activities of the first group are men's responsibility and women are expected to do their duties within the home. Therefore, men are not expected to do these household chores like cleaning, cooking and child caring. Even more so, they should not do them.

Table 2. Changes in the gender division of labor

The values of the generational gap vary between 0 and 1. If a value equals to 1 it means that there are no changes between the two generations. If it comes closer to zero it means that the generational gap is large.

Item	Generational* gap	Gender generational gap	
		male	female*
Women should not work like men with tractor...	1.0	1.0	1.0
Women must take care of children and elders	0.8	0.9	0.6*
Men should not do house chores e.g. cleaning, cooking, caring	0.8	1.0	0.7
Women should not go to credit centers for loan	0.9	1.0	0.8
Men should be responsible to purchase agr. input	1.0	1.0	1.0
Women should not go to market to sell agr. products	1.0	1.0	1.0
Women should take care of husbandry and milk processing	1.0	1.0	1.0

Based on the data we conclude that there are no significant changes between the two generations regarding the gender division of labor in the family. The generations of old and young agree on that men should be responsible for tasks in the public sphere and women are in charge of what should be done in the private domain. That is, men should operate the tractor in the farm, go to market, purchase and sell agricultural inputs and products and go to the bank or other financial organizations to receive loans. Women should be in charge of duties related to children and the elderly of the family and of processing milk products which is done within the household.

The only item which shows some change is the one on “taking care of children and elders”. In the older generation 77 per cent thought it is the duty of women but only 61 per cent of the younger generation agreed that there should be a division of responsibility in the task. It can be added that the older generation’s view is polarized between ‘completely agree’ and ‘disagree’ and 15 per cent are not sure (neutral) whether it should be only the duty of women to do the caring job in the family. This finding shows very slight changes (not statistically significant) when we look at the attitudes of younger generation.

Bringing the gender variable into analysis does not seem to change the results. That is, the majority of male and female in both generations are in favor of the present division of labor and there are no generational differences on these items. There is one exception. The gender generational gap on the item on caring tasks in the family shows that differences between the old and the young female generation is statistically significant. Of the older generation of women 72 per cent agreed with this item and of the

younger generation of women it has declined to 49 per cent. This means young women are expecting some cooperation from men in taking care of children and elderly but men of both generations still think this is the duty of women.

As a result there is no generational gap on gender division of labor in the families of the *Barani* village with the exception of the caring duty where young women are the group which is looking for change.

3. Sex preferences

Parental priorities to have boys rather than girls are defined as family's sex preferences. Sex preferences affect girls' status in the society and more specifically, their situation in nutrition, education and work in the family is indirectly the outcome of the sex preference of parents. In traditional families, especially in rural areas, boys are preferred over girls for many socio-economic reasons.

Items to measure sex preferences of the rural family were developed in two categories: (1) Those related directly to the sex such as the preferences of boys to girls in number and also as the first born child, (2) Those related to providing more educational opportunities for boys and perceiving girls' relocation to the city for education as a problem.

The research findings show (table 3) that there are statistical significant differences between the two generations on this scale (t test of equality of mean is -2.3 at the 0.01 level of significance). That is, one generation has a more favorable attitudes towards gender equality than the other.

Analysis of data on the first two items of sex preferences shows some moderate changes and less agreement with preference of boys over girls. It seems that for the younger generation boys and their number in the family is not very important; however half of the younger generation still like to have more boys in the family and 22 per cent of them do not take any position for or against these two items.

Table 3. Changes in sex preferences

The values of the generational gap vary between 0 and 1. If a value equals to 1 it means that there are no changes between the two generations. If it comes closer to zero it means that the generational gap is large.

Item	Generational* gap	Gender generational gap	
		male	female*
I like a boy for the first born			
to the family	0.7*	0.9	0.5*
I like to have more sons	0.8*	1.0	0.5*
Boys should go to school,			
and not girls	1.0	2.7	0.4*
Girls should not be sent to			
the cities for education	0.8	1.5	0.3*

On those items which relate to the preferences of boys' education over girls' in the family, which indirectly represent sex preferences, there is no statistical significant difference between the two generations. The shares of those who disagreed with these items are almost equal in the old and the young generation (respectively 87 per cent and 82 per cent on the first item and 69 per cent and 72 per cent on the second item). Generally it seems that the old and the young generation both have agreed that education for girls is as important as for boys and that the family should provide equal opportunities for all children.

Looking into the generational differences within the male and the female populations on each item one discovers that the younger generation of women is the source of change and of generational gap. On the item of "I like to have a son as the first child" men in both generations have responded more positively. In the older generation of men 82 per cent and in the younger generation 77 per cent agreed that they like to have a son first. However, among the younger generation of women, the share of those who agreed with this item has declined by almost half (71 per cent in the older generation of women in comparison to 38 per cent in the younger generation of women).

On the second item of this variable, women in the younger generation show more change and favor of gender equality. But in the male generation, younger men, like their fathers, prefer to have more sons in the family. Strangely enough, on equality of educational opportunity the change is reversed. Younger men, contrary to their fathers, believe boys' education should have a higher priority in the family.²

Actually, girls and boys have moved in two different directions on educational issues. While over 50 per cent of the girls disagree with any preferences for boys, male population in the same group has not changed at all in comparison to the older generation of men (0.9 and 1.0) and like their fathers they want to hold on to their higher status and keep priorities based on their sex.

As a result, although there are generational differences on sex preferences, there is in the male population a reverse cycle: the attitude has changed toward giving boys more advantages. Girls are those who are striving for cultural change. The generational gap between them and their mothers as well as between them and their counterparts in the male population (the young generation of male) is significant. Therefore it seems that girls are the source of the gendered generational gap on sex preferences.

Conclusion

Two main factors have been recognized as the source of socio-cultural change in Iran; the modernization process and the Islamic Revolution (Abrahamian 1377, Shaditalab 2006:14–17).

2 The question that needs further studies is whether the decline in illiteracy rate among rural women and achievements of young women at the universities, on the one hand, and unemployment rate among young rural boys, on the other, are reasons for dissatisfaction among younger men.

In the last three decades, the processes of change have gained momentum and Iranian scholars have conducted many studies on generational gaps in the large cities. As a result, a very large segment of population have not attracted much attention in these studies; women in the rural areas.

The fact that rural residents have been ignored in generational/gender studies could be due to their inactive role in the front line of Revolution. Also modernization is a process which starts in the cities. Therefore, in rural areas, where the new events are scarce and changes are residual and very slow, a forming of a new generation has not been expected.

This article aims at exploring how changes in the last three decades after Islamic Revolution have influenced generations of the rural areas of Iran. Has the gender factor enhanced generational gaps?

The study has been conducted in the village of *Ali Barani* in *Islamabad Gharb* in the province of Kermanshah. There are 76 families with almost 500 individuals living in this village. The villagers are from the *Gourani* tribe and they are believers of *Ahle Hagh*. The followers of *Ahle Hagh* see themselves as Moslems interested in saving old customs and traditions of their ancestors and the Iranian culture (Tabibi 1371:287).

Based on the field observations and quantitative data analysis, it is concluded that generational/gender roles and relations are changing also in the rural areas of Iran such as in the remote village of *Barani* with its very traditional structure.

Research findings show that the rate of agreement with men's absolute decision making authority in the family has declined and that the younger generation has moved towards more moderate views. On almost all types of decisions the younger female generation demands a right for decision making within the family and expects their voice to be heard by their counterpart.

Although generational differences among women are significant it seems that male respondents of both generations agree that women cannot be responsible for the family's financial issues. Interestingly enough, the theme of these values is embedded in Iranian Civil Code which appoints men as the sole responsible to support their family financially (article 1106, 1111, and 1114). How far resistance to changes of this type of values among men is the result of the laws or of the customs is not the issue of this article but the important finding is that young women have changed more than young men and that there are differences between generations as well as gendered generations.

Regarding the gender division of labor, the generations of the old and the young both agree that men should be responsible for tasks in the public sphere and women should be in charge of what is done in the private domain. As a result there is no generational gap on gender division of labor in the families of *Barani* village. The only difference is on the caring duty where young women are looking for changes.

Analysis of data of sex preferences shows some moderate changes and less agreement with preference of boys over girls. Also, it seems that the old and the young generation both have agreed that education for girls is important too. However, strangely enough, on equality of educational opportunities, the changes between the sexes have

moved in two opposite directions. That is, young men, contrary even to their fathers, believe boys' education should have higher priorities in the family, while young women (over 50 per cent) disagree with any preferences for boys' education.

It seems that young rural women are those who are striving for changes in patriarchal values in the family and that the generational gap between them and their mothers as well as between them and their counterparts in male population (the young generation of male) is significant. Therefore rural girls like the girls in the large cities are the source of cultural change in the future.

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3 The Persian language references in this article include dates that refer to both the Iranian calendar and the Western calendar. To compare the two 621 years should be added to the Iranian dates.

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